

UPSTAIRS BULLETIN

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In the very recent issue of Dance Magazine which carried a very extensive article on JOHN NEUMEIER'S career, much was left unsaid and it elaborated too much on the influence of Sybil Shearer- who may have directed his path only on "how-not" to run a company. Probably the greatest influence on John's career was FATHER JOHN WALSH at Marquette who was not mentioned in the article. Walsh was a theatrical genius (tossed around by the Jesuits) and was a dynamic force while at Marquette. It was Walsh who brought John to us and got us interested in him. He performed and studied with us for three years. From what we read of John's ballets they seem to have a literary bent and it is interesting to note here that the SC ballets John appeared in were also of a literary nature. Namely, "Hansel and Gretel", "Alice in Wonderland", "Like a Weeping Willow", "In my Landscape", "In Whom I Live Dying", "Les Biches", and "The Singing Yankees". Often what is unsaid is of more importance than what is said.

MARY LANDRY, one of Chicago's early ballet teachers of importance died recently in California. Many of Chicago's teachers and dancers just prior to our generation came from her classroom. This classroom, incidentally was the same one we shared with MARGOT KOCHÉ in the Stevens Building when we first moved into the loop in the late 30's. Marie Landry taught in that studio up until 1928 when Helen Kurniker took it over. We followed her in the pleasant but very inadequate studio. However, we enjoyed it until the war broke up our school for a period of time. STONE went into the service first (for four long years) and I carried on until I enlisted in the 108th General Hospital Unit of Loyola University.

When I left, RUTH PAGE, AGNES DE MILLE and SONA OSATO made a short lived attempt to keep the classes going without success. Most of the pupils, especially the children, the important ones, found their way into EDNA LUCILLE BAUM'S classes; where they remained until the school was reorganized in the 40's at the RKO Grand Theatre Building on Clark Street.

QUIDNUNC'S.

Reading the recent reviews by the local critics for Ruth Page's effort at the Goodman Theatre should give Mid-America and the general public the idea that there never will be a Chicago based company. Not a single critic is willing, nor ever will be willing, to allow a group to grow in Chicago. Personal animosities, lack of any actual dance knowledge, all ends up in criticism of everything but the dance itself. Besides the fact that everyone is inclined to put too much stock in our floating Ex-Ballerinas whose fame grows simply because they are not dancing and cannot be judged as they judge. Incidentally, the term 'Ballerina' is grossly misused today and has absolutely no meaning in anything but a Royal or government sponsored company. The better companies no longer use the term. The city of Milwaukee has always with dozens of "famous" European Ballerinas that no one has ever heard of. Of late, Chicago seems to have its share of these illustrious people whose fame is out of the reach of judgement.

NEWS.

PEGGY MORNER LYMAN presently dancing in the Musical "Sugar" has been asked to join the Martha Graham group for the New York spring season and the summer Lake

Placid season. PAT CUMMINGS, one of our busiest boys is at present working on the movie-"Mame" assisting Ona White and dancing in the film. Also in the film are JIM MORSKI and FRANCIS ZONY. One of the many old friends we did not hear from at the holidays is VI POTTER (Stevens Building days). Early in February she passed away with cancer. I last saw her at the funeral of RUTH BIELINSKI who had also died of cancer. JORENE HOLAS finishing her contract with the Houston Ballet will be home in April before going to Europe. THEA, now NERISSA BARNES, was home with the Alvin Ailey Dance Group. She is new in the group and is only in a few numbers but her presence was noted when she was there. NAOMI SORKIN has recently signed as a Principle Dancer in the San Francisco Ballet which is undergoing a complete reorganization. JAN ORR is hard at work preparing to be a part of a dance team that will be dancing on a cruise operating between Boston and Bermuda this spring.

AUDRE DECKMANN and DARRELL NOTARA (not with each other) both of whom have had ballet careers in American Ballet Theatre have for several years enjoyed this type of work and at the same time have seen much of the world. We finally saw the much heralded, much exaggerated and over designed "No No Nannette". Raouel Pene de Bois sets and costumes were more a lampoon on the period than a loving reproduction. We enjoyed it because of MICHEY KOZYRA who stood out in many of the dance scenes. His boyishness and happy face was a relief among those tired New York gypsies who were about as unattractive a crew as ever appeared on a stage. It appears that PHOEBE REDMOND is getting along nicely in the Black Repertory Dance Company in Washington D.C. KAREN TIMS writes that she is doing more and more

in the Netherlands Dance Theatre and loving it every minute of it. JOAN & ALAN STONE are the happy parents of a baby boy as of the 27th of March. SHEILA & BILL REILLY'S father passed away the end of February after a long illness. PATRICK & LINDA HEIM for the funeral of his Mother who also has been ailing for some time.

A ROUGH SPORT?

An article appeared recently in the Chicago Daily News by their science editor, Arthur J. Snider, entitled-"Ballet rates as a rough jolting sport. "The article rather begins damning ballet but if one reads beyond the headline it praises it as a physical activity. Because few people read beyond the headline, it was not a good article for ballet.

A few months back we recieved a questionnaire (there is one of some kind in every mail) asking us to list all the accidents, complaints fractures, broken bones, and injuries in our school for the period of unknown years. Naturally these injuries were supposed to be due to dance. Questionnaires infuriate me to begin with so in the waste basket it went.

This said D. Miller of the University of Cincinnati Medical Center is really misinformed by the people who do not answer his mail. In this case we too are guilty. If he had conferred with Dr. School on the number of every day workers who walk around with band-aids, corn plasters and bunyon protectors (Miller's reference to dancers), people who have never been in a ballet class, he would know that these are common complaints about feet from everyone who walks on a city street.

For Dr. Miller's information (and I am approaching 50 years of

teaching ballet) accidents such as he describes can be caused by stepping off a street curb, wearing ridiculous shoes, gymnastics, cheer leading and participating in the notoriously bad physical education in our public schools. The moment a girl goes out for cheer leading, I mentally cancel her out - by the end of the year she will have suffered knee injuries, a broken ankle, disjointed bones, torn muscles or some other calamity. Had I filled out his questionnaire any accident I might report would be of this source - not a ballet class or a performance.

It would be foolish to say that dancers do not have accidents because they do like every other person who walks about. In most cases accidents are caused or due to faults in their work, things they have been warned against time and time again; such as not warming up properly before hard physical activity, not centering the weight properly on the feet, the use of too much rosin, and working on bad floors and stages. These are the hazards of dance all teachers have warned their students about. Few people in an audience watching a performance at the McCormic Place realize that it has the worst stage in the country to dance on. The Auditorium is one of the best. Wood over concrete does not constitute an adequate floor for dance; there must be some spring and give to a floor or the dancers knee and ankle joints will be taking the punishment.

I would agree that ballet is as strenuous as profession football or basket ball but I do not agree that our injuries are worse. In the years that I have been in dance, accidents that come to mind with dancers have been from other athletic activities, such as cheer leading,

skiing, skating, horse back riding, trampoline work and the like. When dancers enter sports they unconsciously throw more effort into what they are doing and can have an accident. There are certain people who are known to be accident prone and regardless of what they do they will suffer some injury. It is interesting to note that most athletes are through by 30 where the dancer is just entering their best years.

The intimidation that dancers problems are different from any ordinary person doing work equally athletic is false. In my own case, back problem, caused I am convinced by starting late and forcing the body to do things designed for younger bodies. However since my operation, I have talked to dozens of back-problem-alumni, none of them dancers, and I have fared better because of dance.

Severence of the achilles tendon is a disastrous thing for any athlete or dancer, and yet, seldom does an athlete recover where often a dancer does, limited of course, but still with considerable facility. In the classroom dancers are warned constantly about the use of demi plie to keep this tendon flexible.

In the growth of ballet's popularity, the teacher today is faced with problems that the masters of old never faced. They, usually taught only students of outstanding talent and with excellent physical qualifications. Now days students range from 5 to 50 with every conceivable body type, no apparent talent but full of ambition and an overload of ego. Many of these amateurs, in a day a amateurism, do make the grade which only lowers the standard of the art.

The study of ballet is not for every one or anybody. In late years the greater interest in ballet, thousands of adults yearn to study whether it is good for them or not. When the body is once set and rigid the use or attempt of outward rotation of the legs can and will create knee and ankle problems. Sickling of the feet is definitely dangerous and the dancer who does not correct this fault will be in danger of breaking an ankle. The dancer without this outward rotation of the legs will not have good balance, line or facility of movement, so it is a very necessary part of the training.

Even with the child, when young and possessing all the charm of youth, all the vitality, expressiveness that one is fascinated by - one must consider what will that child's body mature into. Girls have a way today of growing into giants and the boys into midgets, certainly not helpful for a career in dance. The growth pattern does weird things during adolescence.

Riding on public transportation any morning to work one can see many unattractive, disgruntled and misshapen objects of humanity and think that at one time, they too were beautiful and charming youths. Nature, Life, or one's ancestry has a way of playing tricks that are not at all kind. The wise teacher will not encourage those to become professional who do not have the best qualifications. If the student understands they are only studying for the pleasure of moving and the side benefits of dance, then, there is some justification for the study of dance.

THE SINGING YANKEES ... 1942-1973

A local critic once said to me - upon hearing that I was to revive "Dr. Eli Duffy" with a new boy - DEAN BADOLATO... "Oh, no, not that again". This same critic had sat through an incalculable number of "Nutcrackers", "Swan Lakes" and "Sleeping Beauties" and would never admit that they can be the epitome of dullness. Not one to listen to every criticism we did "Duffy" for a good many years with success and it was retired due to my incapacity and Dean's growing up.

In reviving "The Singing Yankees" with the eighth cast this spring I can hear it all over again. We usually revive numbers when the right cast turns up for them and this year I had an excess of talent so enlarged the group to six. When it first appeared in 1942 it was titled "Songs of Yesteryear". It was based on the idea of an imaginary performance of the Hutchinson Family who sang on the Ohio River boats in the 80's. It is two years older than "Duffy" and had had very much the same exposure, audience wise. It has been performed for audiences of children, Women's Clubs and is a favorite with men's audiences. It has also been used on concerts, educational conventions, church programs and chautauqua campmeetings.

This number has been useful on programs to give our alumni a different type of experience and as many of our students in the past have turned to singing and acting it proves a point.

Not all can get into a ballet company and there are those who do not want to. Eleven boys and eight girls will have performed these songs in April. In the past WILLIAM REILLY, PATRICK HEIM, PATRICK CUMMINGS, DALLAS EDMUNDS and JOHN NEUMEIER all were capable of speaking roles when they left the school. In the case of Cummings his first engagement was an actor-dancer role. He has been deeply appreciative of this experience and has often advised us to force all pupils to do the same.

The program this year will present almost a new group of budding talents, especially among the girls. These are well worth watching for -- DIANE REILY, TRACEY HUNTLEY, JUDITH BARDIS, and DARLENE CALLAGHAN. MORAG MAC KENZIE, the young scotch girl who first appeared in the opera "Wozzeck", in 1965, will have a great deal more experience this year. ANDREW SCHULTZ, son of a former alumni of the Yankees will also be prominent. It is hardly fair not to mention each and every one but in the next two years - YOU - the AUDIENCE will be helping them make a career. We like to be an aid in their careers but in the end it is the audience that makes it possible to have success. YOU - the AUDIENCE can, with persistence and ardor, help Chicago talent on their way.

ROLAND YOUNG'S poem "The Flea" is very appropriate today -

And here's the happy bounding flea -
You cannot tell the he from she.
The sexes look alike, you see;
But she can tell and so can he.

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